

Welsh Government

## Consultation Document

# Proposed changes to homelessness data collections

Date of issue: 4 March 2015

Action required: Responses by 1 April 2015



<b>Overview</b>	<p>This consultation seeks views on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ specific changes to both the amount and frequency of information collected and published on statutory homelessness.</li> </ul>
<b>How to respond</b>	<p>You can respond to the consultation by using the separate response form (in Excel format). This can be emailed to <a href="mailto:stats.housing@wales.gsi.gov.uk">stats.housing@wales.gsi.gov.uk</a> or posted to:</p> <p>Judith David  Housing Statistics  Knowledge and Analytical Services  Welsh Government  Cathays Park, Cardiff, CF10 3NQ</p>
<b>Further information and related documents</b>	<p><b>Large print, Braille and alternate language versions of this document are available on request.</b></p>
<b>Contact details</b>	<p>For further information, please contact Judy David</p> <p>Email: <a href="mailto:stats.housing@wales.gsi.gov.uk">stats.housing@wales.gsi.gov.uk</a></p> <p>Telephone: 029 2082 5055</p>
<b>Data protection</b>	<p><b>How the views and information you give us will be used</b></p> <p>Any response you send us will be seen in full by Welsh Government staff dealing with the issues which this consultation is about. It may also be seen by other Welsh Government staff to help them plan future consultations.</p> <p>The Welsh Government intends to publish a summary of the responses to this document. We may also publish responses in full. Normally, the name and address (or part of the address) of the person or organisation who sent the response are published with the response. This helps to show that the consultation was carried out properly. If you do not want your name or address published, please tell us this in writing when you send your response. We will then blank them out.</p>

Names or addresses we blank out might still get published later, though we do not think this would happen very often. The Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the Environmental Information Regulations 2004 allow the public to ask to see information held by many public bodies, including the Welsh Government. This includes information which has not been published. However, the law also allows us to withhold information in some circumstances. If anyone asks to see information we have withheld, we will have to decide whether to release it or not. If someone has asked for their name and address not to be published, that is an important fact we would take into account. However, there might sometimes be important reasons why we would have to reveal someone's name and address, even though they have asked for them not to be published. We would get in touch with the person and ask their views before we finally decided to reveal the information.

## Background

Currently, data on homelessness are collected on a quarterly basis from the 22 local authorities and covers their actions under the homelessness provisions of the Housing Act 1996. This places a statutory duty on local authorities to provide assistance to people who are homeless or threatened with homelessness. Authorities must consider all applications from people seeking accommodation or help in getting accommodation. A household is owed the main homelessness duty by a local authority if it is eligible, unintentionally homeless, and falls within a defined priority need category, such as households with dependant children, or is vulnerable for some other reason.

The information is published in a quarterly statistical headline and bi-annual release, which is used by the Welsh Government to develop and monitor policies on homelessness. It is also used by the Welsh Government in local government settlement calculations. Local authorities and other housing organisations use the information to monitor the national and local picture with regards to homelessness, as well as for performance monitoring and planning purposes.

The latest statistical release is available here:

<http://gov.wales/statistics-and-research/homelessness/?lang=en>

The latest data collection forms are available here:

<http://gov.wales/statistics-and-research/homelessness-data-collection/?lang=en>

## Issues

The Housing Act (Wales) 2014 became law in Wales on 17 September 2014. The Housing Act (Wales) 2014 included a number of changes to homelessness legislation aimed at reducing levels of homelessness by placing its prevention at the centre of local authority duties to help people at risk. The changes to statutory homelessness legislation arising from the Housing (Wales) Act 2014 are due to be introduced at the end of April 2015.

The Welsh Government have been working closely with local authority data providers since the spring of 2014, to assess the new data requirements resulting from the Housing Act (Wales) 2014 and, in particular, those relating to the prevention and relief of homelessness. Limited summary information covering actions taken by local authorities to prevent or relieve homelessness has already been collected, on a voluntary basis, since 1 April 2014, as part of the regular quarterly statutory homelessness data collection. The aim being to use this as base line information for evaluating the impact of the new legislation, once introduced in April 2015.

The new information requirements involved in centrally monitoring the legislative changes and ensuring they are being consistently applied across all local authorities in Wales are considerable. .

To ensure the new requirements are able to be delivered and to minimise the burden on data providers, it will not be possible to collect all of the extra data requirements arising from the new homelessness legislation on both a quarterly and an annual basis. The usability of the extra detail on a quarterly basis, given the low numbers for some data

items also means there would be little value in collecting this information quarterly and it would represent a disproportionate burden on data providers

Following further discussions with policy leads, local authority data providers and key stake holders, we have produced a set of proposals for changes to the amount and frequency of data collected and published, both quarterly and annually, on statutory homelessness.

## **Proposals for change**

The purpose of this consultation is to seek users' views on proposals for collecting more detailed annual data covering all aspects of the new legislation along with a reduction in the data collected and published quarterly to headline information to ensure the information being collected is proportionate and minimises the burden on providers. The information to be collected annually will include:

- Information on all those threatened with homelessness under Section 66;
- Equalities information covering all cases of prevention and relief, as well as households subject to duty to help secure under Section 73;
- Actions taken to successfully prevent or relieve homelessness; and
- Information on those homeless or threatened with homelessness because they are prison leavers.

We are putting forward the following specific proposals for changes to both the quarterly and annual Homeless data collection returns, with effect from April 2015 for the 2015-16 financial year. We are also proposing changes to the information published quarterly and annually on statutory homelessness.

### **Proposal 1 – Changes to quarterly data collection**

A copy of the draft quarterly data collection return is attached for reference.

#### **Table 1 – Households for which assistance has been provided during the quarter**

We propose to continue collecting this existing table quarterly, but also collect additional information from April 2015, as required by the new homelessness legislation covering the following:

- Households eligible but not threatened with homelessness
- Households eligible, homeless and subject to duty to help secure under Section 73
- A breakdown of single person households for each decision type
- The number of unsuccessful cases of prevention and relief due to 'Assistance refused' and 'Non-co-operation'

#### **Table 6 – Homeless households temporarily accommodated by your authority at the end of the quarter**

This table is currently Table 5. We propose to continue collecting this information quarterly but reduce the amount of detail required from April 2015. The table will cover

information on the number of homeless households in temporary accommodation at the end of the quarter, including the number of families with children in each accommodation type. However, information on length of time by accommodation type will no longer be collected quarterly.

**Table 3 – Households found to be eligible for assistance, unintentionally homeless and in priority need during the quarter by category of priority need.**

We propose to no longer collect Table 3 on a quarterly basis from April 2015 onwards. Similar information will be collected on an annual basis.

**Table 4 – Households found to be eligible for assistance, unintentionally homeless and in priority need during the quarter by main reason for loss of last settled home.**

We propose to no longer collect Table 4 on a quarterly basis from April 2015 onwards. Similar information will be collected on an annual basis.

**Table 6 – Households leaving accommodation provided under S193 and S194.**

We propose to no longer collect Table 6 on a quarterly basis from April 2015 onwards

**The evidence for change**

The changes to the legislation covering statutory homelessness included in the Housing Act (Wales) 2014 will come into effect on 27 April 2015. From April 2015 onwards, we will need to monitor how the new legislation is being implemented by local authorities across Wales.

We would be able to introduce the new data collection forms with effect from the April to June 2015 quarter with minimal resource implications for Welsh Government or data providers as less information will need to be provided quarterly.

The changes outlined above would allow us to collect and publish headline information covering the new statutory homelessness legislation on a quarterly basis, with effect from April 2015.

***Specific consultation questions:***

- *Do you agree with the proposal?*
- *What are your reasons for this, including any impact this change might have on your work?*

**Proposal 2 – Changes to the annual data collection**

A copy of the draft annual data collection return is attached for reference.

**Table 1 – Households for which assistance has been provided during the year, by age and sex of applicant.**

We propose to collect all the information collected on the quarterly form, but also the age and gender of the applicant.

**Table 2 – All cases where positive action succeeded or did not succeed in preventing/relieving homelessness.**

We propose to introduce this as a **new annual detailed table** covering all cases where positive action either succeeded or did not succeed in preventing or relieving homelessness. For those successful cases of prevention and relief, we propose to also collect information on the type of action taken.

**Table 3 – Households found to be eligible for assistance, unintentionally homeless and in priority need during the year: Categories of priority need by type of household (section 75).**

Table 3 is an **existing table**. We propose to continue to collect this detailed information on priority need and household type on an annual basis.

**Table 4a – Households found to be threatened with homelessness during the year. Main reason for being threatened with homelessness by type of household (Section 66).**

We propose to introduce this **new annual detailed table**. It will cover all households threatened with homelessness under section 66 of the new legislation during the year, by reason for being threatened with homelessness and household type

**Table 4b – Households found to be eligible, homeless subject to duty to help to secure during the year. Main reason for loss of last settled home by type of household (Section 73).**

We propose to introduce this **new annual detailed table**. It will cover all eligible, homeless households subject to a duty to help secure accommodation under Section 73 of the new legislation during the year, by reason for loss of home and household type.

**Table 4c – Households found to be eligible, homeless but not in a priority need or homeless, in a priority need but intentionally so during the year. Main reason for loss of last settled home by type of household.**

We propose to introduce this **new annual detailed table**. It will cover all eligible, homeless households who are either not in priority need or who are in priority need, but intentionally so during the year, by reason for loss of home and household type

**Table 4d – Households found to be eligible, unintentionally homeless and in priority need during the year. Main reason for loss of last settled home by type of household (Section 75).**

Table 4d is an **existing table**. We propose to continue to collect this detailed information on households eligible, unintentionally homeless and in priority need during the year by reason for loss of home and household type.



**Table 5 – Households for which decisions were taken during the year, by ethnic group of applicant .**

This is a **new detailed table** covering all households for which decisions were taken during the year, by ethnicity including:

- Ineligible households
- Eligible, but not homeless or threatened with homelessness
- Households eligible, threatened with homelessness, prevention assistance provided under Section 66 of the new legislation
- Households eligible, homeless and subject to duty to help to secure under Section 73 of the new legislation
- Eligible, homeless but not in priority need
- Eligible, homeless and in a priority need, but intentionally so
- Eligible, unintentionally homeless and in priority need under Section 75 of the new legislation.

**Table 6 – Homeless households temporarily accommodated by your authority at the end of the quarter, by household type and length of time.**

This is an **existing table** (currently Table 5). We propose to continue collecting this detailed information covering homeless households in temporary accommodation at the end of the period, by type of accommodation, length of time in that accommodation and household type.

**Table 7 – Reasons for discharge of duty under section 75 during the quarter.**

This is an **existing table** (currently Table 6), but we propose to change the table in terms of title, guidance and definitions. The table will cover those households for whom final duty under S75 has ended, by reason duty has been discharged as follows:

- Ceased to be eligible
- Withdrawal of application
- Mistake of Fact
- Became homeless intentionally from accommodation provided under section 75
- Accepted an offer of accommodation through the allocation scheme (Part VI 1996 HA)
- Accepted a private sector offer
- Voluntarily ceased to occupy accommodation made available under section 75
- Refusal of an offer of accommodation through the allocation scheme (Part VI 1996 HA)
- Refusal of an offer of suitable accommodation in the Private Rented Sector
- Refusal to co-operate

**The evidence for change**

The changes to the legislation covering statutory homelessness included in the Housing Act (Wales) 2014 will come into effect on 27 April 2015. We will need to collect sufficient detailed information centrally, in order to monitor how the new legislation is being implemented by local authorities across Wales, from April 2015 onwards, and to ensure it is applied consistently and correctly across all local authorities.

The information collected will need to cover all activities undertaken by local authorities to prevent and relieve homelessness under Sections 66, 73 and 75 of the new legislation. In order to monitor the impact of the new legislation on those applying to their local authority for housing assistance, we will also need to collect information on the age, gender, household type, ethnicity and other protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010, for all applicants.

**Specific consultation questions:**

- *Do you agree with the proposal?*
- *What are your reasons for this, including any impact this change might have on your work?*

**Proposal 3 – Changes to publication of statutory homeless data**

Currently, we publish the following each year:

- Two quarterly headlines covering summary data for the April to June and October to December quarters,
- Two bi-annual releases, one covering the July to September quarter and one covering the January to March quarter and the year as a whole.

StatsWales: All information collected quarterly and annually is published on StatsWales.

For the **April to June 2015 quarter onwards**, we propose to publish the following:

- Three quarterly headlines covering summary data for April to June, July to September and October to December each year.
- An annual release covering the January to March quarter and the year as a whole.

On **StatsWales**, we propose to continue to publish all data items collected and published quarterly and annually, though on a quarterly basis the data items would be reduced in line with the reduction in data being collected, as outlined below:

- No quarterly information by priority need and main reason for loss of home for households accepted as eligible unintentionally homeless and in priority need,
- No quarterly information on length of time households have been in temporary accommodation,
- No quarterly information on households leaving temporary accommodation.

**The evidence for change**

The proposed changes to the information published on statutory homelessness would ensure that relevant and useful headline information continues to be publically available each quarter and can be used to assess the impact of the new legislation. The headline information would continue to be available at an individual local authority level each quarter on StatsWales.

Annually, a detailed statistical release will be published providing full analysis of the activities undertaken by local authorities to prevent or relieve homelessness under the new legislation, along with information on the applicants. A full data set at an individual local authority level will continue to be available on StatsWales.

Whilst some quarterly information will no longer be collected and published, as outlined above, this will be offset by the increased information available on an annual basis.

***Specific consultation questions:***

- *Do you agree with the proposal?*
- *What are your reasons for this, including any impact this change might have on your work?*